



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

USAID's Urban Gardens Program Improves Lives of HIV Affected Children and Women

Nearly 10,000 households are now managing urban vegetable gardens to improve their nutritional status and increase their income level. All of these homes, based in urban areas across the country, are headed by low-income women or orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) affected

by HIV/AIDS, many receiving home-based care.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began the Urban Agriculture Program for HIV Affected Children & Women in 2004, focusing on Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar. The success of the program in these

two cities led to an expansion to four other major urban areas – Gondar, Dessie, Adama, and Awassa – benefiting nearly 40,000 Ethiopians.

The program is part of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, a five

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President Bush's Christmas Greeting

"For unto us a child is born ... and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

-- Isaiah 9:6

For centuries, patient men and women listened to the words of prophets and lived in joyful expectation of the coming Messiah. Their patience was rewarded when a young virgin named Mary welcomed God's plan with

great faith, and a quiet birth in a little town brought hope to the



world. For more than two millennia, Christians around the world have celebrated Christmas to mark the birth of Jesus and to thank the Almighty for His grace and blessings.

In this season of giving, we also remember the universal call to love our neighbors. Millions of compassionate souls take time during the holidays to help people who are hurt, feed those who are hun-

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USAID's Urban Gardens Program Improves Lives . . .

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year, \$15 billion dollar commitment to combat the pandemic in more than 120 countries in the world. An important component of the initiative is to combine training on gardening techniques, like drip irrigation management, with HIV/AIDS education. Urban garden beneficiaries are also linked to other PEPFAR Ethiopia supported HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services.

In addition to the production of food and generation of income for the household, the gardening activity provides other benefits to the

households, members of the community, and the environment. Instead of focusing on their illness or a family member's illness due to HIV/AIDS, program participants spend time managing their gardens. They also talk to other community members when selling their crop surplus, teaching neighbors about vegetable growing and reducing HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination. Of the over 13,000 orphans and vulnerable children served by the program to date, many children are using the money they get from selling their vegetables to buy school supplies such as pencils, pens and exercise books. The urban gardens use a micro drip

irrigation system, which is a more efficient use of water and labor compared to conventional gardening. The gardens also play a vital role in environmental care, as many of the garden plots were once dumping sites or unused land. In addition, solid waste from the household is recycled as compost, or organic fertilizer, for the gardens.

The program is led by Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI), working with a network of 23 local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations of people living with HIV/AIDS. ♦

President Bush's Christmas Greeting

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gry, and shelter those who need homes. Our Nation also thinks of the men and women of our military who are spending Christmas at posts and bases around the world and of the loved ones who pray for their safe return. America owes a debt of gratitude to our service members and their families.

The simple story of Christmas speaks to every generation and holds a sense of wonder and surprise. During this time of joy and peace, may we be surrounded by the love of family and friends and take time to reflect on the year ahead. Laura and I pray that this season will be a time of happiness in every home and a time of peace throughout the world. Merry Christmas.

GEORGE W. BUSH

(end text)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦



U.S. Does Not Plan To Send Troops Against al-Qaida in Somalia

By Vince Crawley
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States has no intention of sending military forces to Somalia to remove al-Qaida-backed militants from power, a senior U.S. diplomat told reporters December 14.

Jendayi Frazer, assistant secretary of state for African affairs, called on Somalia's competing factions to open talks aimed at achieving a stable government. She also urged international follow-through on a December 6 U.N. Security Council resolution that authorizes an African peacekeeping force to protect Somalia's Transitional Federal Government.

"That's not a plan that we have on the table, for the U.S. government and our U.S. military to deploy to Mogadishu [Somalia]," Frazer told reporters at the State Department. "That's not really something that we're saying to our Congress and our public that we want as part of our strategy."

Somalia has lacked an effective national government since early 1991. The Transitional Federal Government was formed with international cooperation in 2004 and currently is based in Baidoa, Somalia. The main city of Mogadishu and the majority of other population centers are controlled by the Union of Islamic Courts, also known as the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC), which is a group of regional courts that emerged after the chaos of the 1990s to restore local order by administering Islamic law, or Shariah. However, in recent months, the courts increasingly have been led by East African al-Qaida militants, including terrorists responsible for the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies

in Kenya and Tanzania.

Frazer said the United States does not seek the overthrow of the Islamic Courts. However, the United States does want to foster moderate leadership within them. The United States also wants the court group to stop its military expansion and to open talks with the transitional government, which has a five-year international mandate to develop a stable, permanent government for all of Somalia, she said.

"The problem is that the CIC is led by extreme radicals right now, not the moderates that we all hoped would emerge," Frazer said. One leading group within the courts, the al-Shaaba, "are radical youth killers," Frazer said. "That's what they are. They're killing nuns, they've killed children and they're calling for jihad."

Radicals within the courts have introduced extreme versions of Islamic law that are at odds with Somalia's history and traditions, Frazer said. "Frankly, public executions, killing people for watching soccer matches, is not consistent with the Somali culture and traditions," she said.

U.S. GOALS

The first U.S. goal for Somalia is to work within the Transitional Federal Charter, which is recognized by the United Nations as the framework for restoring governance to Somalia, Frazer said. The United States wants civil-society groups to join with clans and sub-clans to establish a nationwide system of govern-

ment for the first time in more than 15 years. "That's our ultimate aim," Frazer said.

The Transitional Federal Government, she stressed "is transitional. That's the key point. At the end of five years, the Somali people will have to decide how to govern

themselves." So the goal of the transitional government is "not in fact to get rid of the CIC."

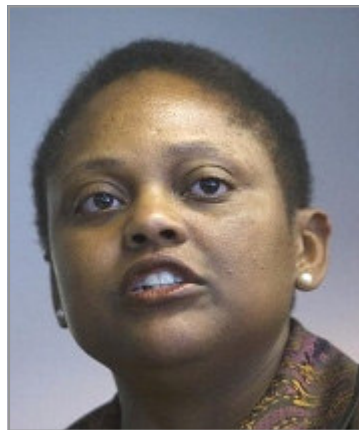
The second U.S. goal for Somalia "is to have these terrorists turned over, particularly the ones who attacked our embassies," Frazer said. Terrorists

associated with the 1998 bombings either are part of Islamic courts groups or have been sheltered and assisted by them, she said.

"The analysis is that there are many more in the courts that are moderate and are just going along," Frazer said, "and we would hope that, eventually, the conditions will be such that they can break off and join with governing Somalia in the traditions of Somalia."

U.S. ambassadors are in talks throughout Africa seeking countries willing to be part of the regional peacekeeping force that would assist the Transitional Federal Government in asserting control and entering into constructive dialogue with the Islamic Courts, Frazer said.

The U.N. Security Council expects the African force to deploy within 30 days, Frazer said. ♦



Jendayi Frazer

Sudan Must Implement Peace Plan by End of 2006, U.S. Envoy Says

By Kathryn McConnell
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- If Sudan does not implement fully a negotiated Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) for Darfur by the end of 2006, the United States will embark on another strategy to bring relief to the many innocent people in the region who are suffering as a result of ongoing hostilities, says U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan Andrew Natsios.

Briefing reporters December 20 at the State Department, Natsios said he hopes to meet soon with incoming U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to ensure there is a unified international message to Sudan to accept the presence of a new "hybrid" international peacekeeping force to provide stability and allow humanitarian efforts to resume in the country's western Darfur region.

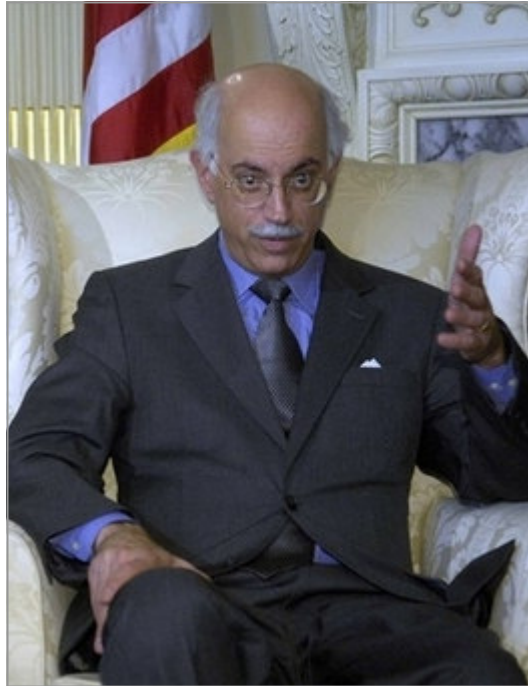
The U.N. Security Council agreed December 19 on the deployment of a hybrid force -- expected to consist of 20,000 troops and police officers from both the United Nations and the African Union (AU) -- to strengthen efforts of the existing African Union force in the region. The mandate of the current African Union force in Darfur ends on January 1, 2007.

Returning from a week in Sudan, Natsios said he had useful meetings with President Omar al-Bashir, presidential adviser and Sudan Liberation Movement leader Minni Minnawi and other senior Sudanese officials.

He stressed the urgency of implementing U.N. agreements to reduce

violence in Darfur and of establishing a cease-fire commission that would include non-CPA signatory rebel groups.

The United States, the leading donor of food aid and humanitarian



U.S. special envoy to Sudan Andrew Natsios gestures while talking to reporters, Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2006 at the State Department in Washington. (AP Photo/Kevin Wolf)

assistance to Sudan, needs the international community to tell Sudan that "in no uncertain terms" it must act to protect its civilians and make it possible for aid workers to reach people in need, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in an interview December 18.

"The time has come for the Khartoum government to accept the help the international community is trying to give it," Rice said.

Natsios said he expects Sudan to accept a presidential statement sub-

mitted to the United Nations reaffirming the U.S. commitment to the peace agreement.

He also praised China for its efforts to advance negotiations for peace in Sudan, which has large, unexplored oil reserves. However, Natsios said, the U.S. interest in the region is not oil, but to see that human rights and humanitarian standards are upheld.

Natsios said he welcomed Sudan's two-year extension of an accelerated procedure that allows nongovernmental organizations and U.N. aid workers to get into Darfur.

He also said he has offered to be an "intermediary" between Sudan and neighboring Chad. Rising violence in Darfur, which borders Chad, is spilling over into Chad, endangering its citizens and threatening to destabilize a larger area.

For a peace agreement in Darfur to be successful, Natsios said, militant groups will have to be disarmed. Because of violence in the region he did not meet with any rebel leaders as he had planned, he added.

Natsios said he was pleased with the recent appointment of Jan Eliasson, former Swedish foreign minister, as a U.N. special envoy for Darfur to deal with the humanitarian and security crisis. Eliasson, who was president of the 60th U.N. General Assembly, will assume his duties at the beginning of 2007. His main task will be to "work the diplomatic channels" outside Sudan to encourage governments to remain

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Making a Difference with Geography in Kenya and Around the World

When young people use geography for sustainable development, they can make a difference in their communities and around the world.

Peter Ndunda is such a young person -- a Kenyan geographer and alumnus of the first year of the My Community, Our Earth (MyCOE) program, which is coordinated by the Association of American Geographers (AAG).

Ndunda grew up in the rural area of Kenya called Mitaboni. Twice a day he walked 10 kilometers from his home to the area's closest primary school. His good grades earned him a place in secondary school, and upon graduation he was accepted in the geography program at Moi University.

"I decided to focus my studies on geography so as to equip myself with the basics of what is on, above and below the Earth's surface," Ndunda said.

He focused on remote-sensing techniques necessary in spatial decision-making. This skill would make a real contribution in solving Kenya's natural resource management issues, including environmental problems and urban and regional planning issues, he said.

While at the university, Ndunda attended the Africa conference on geographic information systems (GIS). Keynote speaker Carmelle Tebrorh spoke about the power of geography and GIS. She also spoke about the newly started MyCOE program and its goal of promoting sustainable development through geographic learning.

Ndunda was inspired. After the conference he decided to organize a GIS Day on campus and formed a team of fellow students to develop geography projects and presentations. His team eventually presented their research at a national scientific exhibition attended by Kenya's president.



Peter Ndunda

Following the exhibition, Ndunda devised a larger-scale project for MyCOE, concentrating on land-use mapping of environmental problems -- soil erosion, garbage dumping in public streets and flooding in slums near sewage drainways -- in an area of Mombasa, Kenya, called Changanwe. These were all problems he had grown up seeing, and he wanted to do something about them.

When the project was completed, copies of his findings were given to

local lawmakers along with an action plan that analyzed the areas most in need of remediation and at greatest risk.

As a result of the project, Ndunda was one of four international students to receive sponsorship to attend the 2002 User Conference of the Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), in the United States. There he met two people with whom he would later work -- Cynthia Moss and Harvey Croze from the Amboseli Elephant Research Project.

Not only did Ndunda's work on a MyCOE project help bring him to the United States, it also shifted his thinking toward community involvement. It encouraged him to try to make a difference and get involved in local issues.

"I felt more responsible for my own actions and how they affected others," he said.

After Ndunda finished his bachelor's degree, he took his first geographic job with ESRI's Eastern Africa regional distribution group. Later he joined the Amboseli Elephant Research Project, where he developed a land-use GIS database to foster sustainable conservation of Kenya's elephants.

Then, pursuing a master's of science in GIS at the University of Redlands in Redlands, California, Ndunda developed a research project creating visualizations of soil erosion in California's San Mateo area. It won second place in ESRI's 2005 Best Practices in Science Modeling Global Contest.

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Congo Still Needs International Aid, Africa Specialists Say

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Despite the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC's) recent successful presidential elections, the international community must continue to help the nation improve its democratic institutions, security and economy, specialists on the region said December 18 at a panel hosted by the Brookings Institution in Washington.

In the country's first open national elections since 1960, the Congolese people voted in presidential and parliamentary elections July 30 and again in a runoff October 29. President Joseph Kabila won re-election and was inaugurated December 6.

The Congolese people conducted themselves throughout the election period with patience, courage, dignity and steely determination, said Ambassador William Swing, the United Nations' special representative to the secretary-general in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The effects of their success, he added, are being felt throughout the nation and the region. But this achievement could be at risk, he said, if the DRC fails to learn from its past, which includes conflicts resulting in 4 million dead, 800,000 refugees scattered throughout nine neighboring countries and the collapse of state services.

The Congolese government will have to develop the country's economy to ensure that the people enjoy the riches that could come from its resources, Swing said. The new government will have to overcome problems such as poorly functioning

institutions, intense corruption, chronic economic mismanagement and an ill-disciplined security force, he said.

The panelists agreed that the DRC would risk a return to political instability and conflict if the international community ceases to provide assistance to the country. International donors, led primarily by the United Nations and the European Union,

build a partnership with the newly elected authorities," Swing said.

A big focus of the international community's work will have to be providing security reforms and training an effective and noncorrupt army and police force, the panelists said. "If we do not recognize the security challenges in the [DRC], we'll be resigning [the country] to a repeat of recent history," said

Susan Rice, former U.S. assistant secretary of state for African affairs.

Several of the panelists said stability in the DRC is essential to stability in its region. A peaceful DRC is important for the United States and other countries as well, Rice said. When a country's economy is weak or a government is unable effectively to secure its borders or provide basic needs to its people, there is a risk the country could become a base for terrorist or criminal groups and the potential for uncontrolled dis-

eases spreading beyond its borders, she explained. Thus, the international community has a great stake in what happens in the DRC, she said.

The DRC will need to embrace the international community's assistance, Rice said. However, Swing said the DRC is a "latent economic powerhouse" with an estimated 10 percent of the world's hydroelectric potential and a wealth of mineral resources, including diamonds, cobalt, gold and copper. "With all these riches, the DRC need not depend for long on international aid if it seizes its chance to consolidate peace and start developing its economic potential," he said. ♦



Congolese residents pass the French checkpoint in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (© AP Images)

have provided aid, funds and peace-keeping support to the nation.

While the international community has a good record in post-conflict management leading up to elections, Swing said, "we have sometimes neglected post-electoral support management." Leaving a country too soon after elections has sometimes led to a costlier international re-intervention, he said. In cases like Sierra Leone, Bosnia and other countries where the international community stayed involved after elections, the nations are on a better track toward permanent peace and stability, Swing said.

"The international community should not abandon, but instead

Education Provides New Opportunities for Girls in Chad

On the dusty streets of N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, a number of frail-looking girls work selling peanuts to passers-by. They speak neither French nor Arabic -- the languages of educated people in the country -- and do not go to school. Instead, they are trying to help their families by earning a tiny income. Without education, they face early marriage as a means of survival.

Close to where the girls sell the peanuts, the U.S. Embassy operates a small English-language training center. The school's typical students -- business people, university students, teachers and others who can afford to study -- pay low fees to attend.

But there are nontypical students as well. In 2003 embassy staff member Marissa Maurer decided to reach out to the peanut girls standing around the language center and invited them, with their parents' approval, to study English for free. The girls agreed -- they usually were not busy during the middle of hot afternoons. The center allowed them a safe, cool and clean place to gather and a chance to learn.

Other girls heard about the program, which grew to provide at any one time an average of 15 girls aged 10 to 17 with new language skills. U.S. Embassy employees and families have raised funds for the center; it has been able to purchase a new video series with workbooks for the girls. The Peace Corps and other organizations have donated books.

The center's lessons teach girls basic skills -- how to speak some English, read, spell and write their names -- and lead them to an increased earning potential. The program also empowers the girls by giving them confidence and a sense of hope.

English because he knows it is very important to us," she said.

English lessons at the center inspired another former student, Haoua, to get a formal education with \$20-a-year funding provided by embassy staff. She no longer



Girls in N'Djamena

One girl student was hired by a restaurant because of her ability to speak English. Another -- 13-year-old Halime -- uses English to persuade customers to buy more peanuts.

"My parents are very happy to see me speak English. They think one day I'll get a very good job and maybe travel," Halime said.

Without the program, these girls would never have set foot inside a school. Anna, 18, stopped coming to the center a year ago when she got married, but has now returned. "My husband let me come study

sells peanuts.

About her three years of English classes, Haoua writes: "I got a job at an ice cream shop and speak to my English-speaking customers in English. They are very surprised and ask how come I speak English. I tell them that I learned it from the American Language Center.

"I want to continue my education. Thank you, embassy donors."

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Texas Volunteers Create Libraries in Ugandan Schools

Claire Kwagala beamed a broad smile to the volunteers from the United States and to school and community officials gathered to dedicate the new library at her elementary school in Kampala, Uganda.

"How lucky we are. We are very grateful," she told the gathering. "This library is a very big gift that will directly benefit us and our other brothers and sisters in the coming generations."

Claire's school, Namirembe Primary School, is one of two Ugandan schools that have received modern libraries, complete with computers and educational software, thanks to Libraries of Love, a nonprofit group based in Texas.

Founded by Trudy Marshall, an elementary school librarian in the community of Round Rock, the all-volunteer group collects and prepares books for library checkout, ships them to Uganda and travels to the schools to convert empty rooms into modern libraries. Volunteers remain on site to instruct teachers and students in organizing and effectively using their new library.

Marshall credits the volunteer group's success to support from their school district, individuals, churches, civic organizations and Austin-area companies, especially computer-maker Dell Inc. The idea of creating school libraries came to Marshall when she visited an ele-

mentary school in Uganda. She asked the children what they wanted from America, and the answer was books.

The libraries serve the community as well as the schools.

"I would like to assure Libraries of Love of our commitment to utilize the donation to improve the academic and social well-being of our

were provided to teachers to use in class and to students so each one could choose a book to keep.

The group is collecting books for more projects for primary and secondary schools in Uganda. It also plans to collect Braille books for blind children in an orphanage.

"It's about more than just books," Marshall said of Libraries of Love.



pupils first, members of staff and the entire community of Namatala," head teacher Judith Nabugyere told volunteers at the dedication of the second Library of Love. That library was opened in June at Namatala Primary School in the town of Mbale, Uganda.

Libraries of Love provided more than 14,600 new and gently used books to the school, which has some 3,200 students. Of these, more than 8,400 were hardcover children's books, both fiction and nonfiction. The remaining books

"It's about students and teachers developing a love of literature, as well as expanding their knowledge in all areas. The Libraries of Love team truly believes that lifelong readers become lifelong learners."

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Second-Generation Muslim Immigrants Feel Strong Islamic Identity

By Elizabeth Kelleher
USINFO Staff Writer



Geneive Abdo

Washington – As the children of generations of immigrants to the United States have grown up, they often have drifted away from the cultures of their parents' home countries. But some experts believe children of Muslim immigrants are different.

The younger generation of Muslims in America is forming a "new Islamic identity," said Geneive Abdo, author of *Mecca and Main Street: Muslim Life in America After 9/11*. She cites an increase in Muslim student associations on college campuses, a push by young parents to build new Islamic schools, and a trend among younger women to don head scarves even if many of their older, female relatives do not wear them. "Young Muslims are becoming more religious than their parents," she told USINFO.

Abdo believes that 9/11 partly caused this surge of Islamic pride among young American Muslims; the terrorist attacks forced Muslims to "defend the faith, explain the faith and turn inward to some extent to form a more cohesive community," she said. Muslims are not turning away from all things American, she said, but "picking and choosing what they will adopt from American society."

Abdo said a growing Islamic identity does not mean American Muslims are becoming "radicalized." That will not happen, she said, in large

part because, unlike in some European countries, Muslims here are "educated professionals ... who enjoy social and economic mobility." A 2003 report titled *Muslims in the United States* and published by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington said 58 percent of American Muslims have graduated from college, more than double the national rate.

Abdo cites a statistics from Georgetown University's Center for Mus-

cate Americans about Islam.

Radwan Masmoudi, who founded the center in 1999, told USINFO of the importance of the organization's outreach projects. He said that, since September 11, 2001, Americans who watch television have seen violence and terrorism committed by extremists. "They don't hear from the silent majority," he said. "They lump Islam with extremists. It is important to tell Christians, Jews and those of other faiths that Islam is against violence



The playground at Al Noor School in Brooklyn, New York

lim-Christian Understanding that shows Muslims' average-household income is \$10,000 higher than average American household income.

MUSLIMS REACH OUT TO TEACH OTHER AMERICANS ABOUT ISLAM

Abdo said she believes Muslims need a voice in the United States, which is why she joined other experts on Muslim life in America at a fundraiser December 9 held in Philadelphia's National Liberty Museum. The event raised money to help the Center for the Study of Islam & Democracy initiate programs to edu-

and terrorism."

Asma Afsaruddin, a professor at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, who joined Abdo at the fundraiser, told USINFO that American Muslims' experiences vary depending on "whether they are fully observant or not, whether they live in a big city, a small town or a rural area." She said that in cities with large Muslim populations -- Detroit, New York, Chicago, Washington -- personal connections between Muslims and non-Muslims exist, making it easier to erase stereotypes.

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Muslim-American Rappers Promote Tolerance in Middle East

By Carolee Walker
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – When Native Deen took hip-hop music to Jerusalem in fall 2006, the group of Muslim-American rappers was moved deeply by the holiness of the place and the energy of the hundreds of teens who attended their concerts. Yet nothing came close to the connection the performers felt to their faith during their Middle East trip.

“I could feel it in the stone and the rocks,” said Naeem Muhammad of Native Deen, a Muslim-American hip-hop group based near Washington that has a strong following in the United Kingdom and the United States.

“Our music inspires Muslims to be better Muslims, but it also gives other people a better view of our faith,” Joshua Salaam told USINFO in an interview.

The rhythm is there, and the beat is contemporary. But the heart of inspirational hip-hop music is in the powerful rap lyrics coaxing listeners to live better lives and be better people.

Native Deen traveled to Turkey, Dubai, the Palestinian Territories and Israel on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, incorporating the teachings of Islam into songs about respect and humanity. At all the concerts, the performers were greeted like “American superstars,” they said. In Dubai, Native Deen won the 2006 Mahabba Award at an event showcasing musicians, artists and filmmakers inspired to spread Islam through art.

The group, founded in 2000, is known for its positive energy, use of traditional percussion and lyrics



Muslim-American rappers Abdul Malik, Joshua Salaam and Naeem Muhammad of Native Deen perform in Jerusalem. (Photo courtesy of Native Deen)

focused on tolerance and the teachings of Islam.

“We use the Quran as a source of guidance for us when we write our songs,” said Abdul Malik. “We use the morals and guidelines that we find in the Quran to teach people and to guide people.” This means that the beat, or rhythm, comes second, according to Salaam. The lyrics are the most important aspect of the song, so in Native Deen’s sound, the rap is always in front of the percussion.

“Deen” is the Arabic word for “religion,” or way of life.

The group’s members met when they were in their early teens in Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA) camps, most often in Ohio, where only percussion instruments were allowed because some Mus-

lims believe that wind and string instruments should be avoided in Islam. Influenced by African-American culture, Salaam, Muhammad and Malik used “beatboxing,” or vocal percussion, and tapping on lunchroom tables to develop with their friends the first Muslim hip-hop sounds that came to be known as MYNA rap. All three Native Deen members can be heard on the MYNA Raps recordings of the early 1990s, but by 2000, Native Deen had set out on its own to record and perform inspirational and spiritual hip-hop.

In the Palestinian Territories and Jerusalem, Native Deen received positive feedback from young people attending the concerts who were impressed that the group uses live drums and percussion instead of electronic tracks. American hip-

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Muslim-American Rappers Promote Tolerance in Middle East . . .

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hop artists often collaborate with international musicians, incorporating traditional instruments and ethnic music. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/Archive/2006/May/12-941281.html>).)

"We take homegrown instruments and make them work," Salaam said. The largest challenge for the group is that it performs raps in English. Although in Turkey the group translated some of the raps, Salaam said it was able to see in its audiences that music bridges the language gap.

"[Audiences] might have anti-American sentiment," Muhammad said. "But they believe in democracy, and they saw us as Muslims who are able to live in America and practice our faith. We got very posi-

tive feedback."

Salaam, who served in the U.S. military in the Air Force, hopes the group will continue to travel internationally because he sees hip-hop as a way to open doors and to encourage religious tolerance and respect.

The rappers performed three concerts in the West Bank, including Al-Quds University in Abu Deis, a village near Jerusalem, in Hebron and Jericho.

Hip-hop began in the United States 30 years ago in the South Bronx, a borough of New York City. Using turntables to spin old, worn records, teens began to talk over music, mostly on the streets and in basements in what were called block parties, creating an entirely new music genre and dance form. This "talking over," or MCing (rapping) or DJing (audio mixing or

scratching), became the essence of rap. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/Archive/2006/May/12-522164.html>).)

Native Deen (<http://www.nativedeen.com/ns/index.php>) audio clips, song lyrics and other information are available on the group's Web site.

For additional information about life in America, see The Arts (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/the_arts.html) and Population and Diversity ([http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population_population_and_diversity.html)).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Sudan Must Implement Peace Plan by End of . . .

(Continued from page 4)

engaged in the issue, said outgoing Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Natsios said he plans to return to Sudan in January 2007 but that details of that trip will be determined by what happens by January 1, 2007. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=December&x=20061215153350eai-fas0.3555261>).)

A transcript (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/78064.htm>) of remarks

by Natsios and Rice after their meeting is available on the State Department Web site, as is a transcript (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/78003.htm>) of Rice's December 18 interview.

For further information on U.S. policy, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html>).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

State Department Gets 6.4 Million Entries for 2008 Visa Lottery

By Jeffrey Thomas
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – More than 6.4 million entries have been received for the 2008 Diversity Visa Lottery, the State Department announced December 15.

The registration period for the program, which is designed to bring greater racial and ethnic diversity to the United States, ended December 3. No additional entries are being accepted.

Applicants whose names will be selected randomly will be eligible to apply for one of 50,000 permanent resident visas made available annually to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States.

In its announcement, the State Department warned that there have been “several attempts” to defraud Diversity Visa Lottery entrants. Winners will be notified by mail between April and July 2007 and only by the Department of State’s Kentucky Consular Center, the State Department said. “No other organi-

zation or company is authorized by the Department of State to contact winning entrants.”

Notifications mailed from the Kentucky Consular Center will provide further instructions, including information on fees connected with immigration to the United States.

Africa accounts for 41 percent of the total applications received during the two-month electronic registration period, from October 4, 2006, through December 3, 2006. Asia accounts for 38 percent, Europe for 19 percent, and South America, Central America, and the Caribbean for 2 percent.

Bangladesh was the country with the largest number of applicants, with more than 1.7 million, followed by Nigeria with 684,000 and Ukraine with 619,000.

Once dependents are taken into account, the total number of participants in the 2008 lottery exceeds 10 million. The 2007 Diversity Visa Lottery attracted more than 5.5 million applications, and approximately 82,000 people in 175 nations re-

ceived letters from the U.S. State Department informing them that they were eligible to apply for a permanent resident visa to the United States. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060719121820cmretrop0.7058069>).)

Additional information (http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/types/types_1322.html) on the Diversity Visa Immigrant Program is available on the State Department Web site.

For additional information on U.S. policies, see Immigration Reform (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/immigration.html) and Population and Diversity (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity.html).

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Making a Difference with Geography in Kenya . . .

(Continued from page 5)

After his studies Ndunda took a position as a geoinformation consultant at the World Bank in Washington. He viewed his work there as a way to help people by working to resolve environmental and sustainable development challenges around the world. Later he took a job to establish a GIS for the Green Belt Movement's reforestation efforts. The Green Belt Movement is led by

Wangari Maathai, recipient of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize.

Not only is Ndunda able to work on sustainable development issues in Africa by analyzing changes in land cover, mapping reforestation efforts, providing information needed for forest management and land-use planning and regulation, he is happy to be returning to Kenya to continue making a difference.

To learn more about AAG (<http://www.aag.org/Info/info.html>) and the MyCOE (<http://www.aag.org/sustainable/>) program, visit their Web sites.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Incoming 110th Congress Reflects American Diversity

By Lea Terhune
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Now that the 109th Congress has adjourned, Americans and their elected representatives are looking ahead to the 110th Congress, which will convene on January 4, 2007. It will be a Congress that reflects America's diversity, closing not only the gender gap -- with the highest number of women elected to Congress in history -- but also the ethnic gap.

Texas Democrat **Ciro Rodriguez** defeated Republican **Henry Bonilla** in a runoff election December 12 in the state's 23rd District, the last congressional race to be decided. His victory gives the Democrats a 31-vote edge in the House of Representatives, with Democrats holding 233 seats to the Republicans' 202. Rodriguez is Hispanic, one of an increasing number of federal and state legislators from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

"The more the tables of power reflect the beautiful diversity of our country, the sooner our policies will reflect the aspirations of the American people," Nancy Pelosi told Simmons College graduates in spring 2006. Now slated to become speaker of the House in the 110th Congress, Pelosi has promised to appoint ethnically diverse congressional committees.

African Americans claimed 42 seats in the House, including two nonvoting seats, and they are likely to figure prominently in important committee appointments. "This is by far the peak -- ever -- for the Congressional Black Caucus," an analyst for the Washington-based Joint Center for Economic Studies, David Bositis, told the Associated Press. The single African American in the Senate

is the charismatic **Barack Obama**, who is seen by many as a potential presidential candidate in 2008.

The complexion of the 110th Congress glows with a rich demographic mix that includes naturalized, first- or second-generation Americans of Asian and Latin American origins. Americans with a distinctive ethnic base played a significant part in the 2006 elections not only as candidates, but as supporters of candidates who represent



*Democratic candidate **Ciro Rodriguez** celebrates with his wife, **Carolina**, after winning a runoff election in the 23rd Congressional District in San Antonio on Dec. 12, 2006.*

their interests. As immigrants make American society and culture their own, they also develop political muscle. The elections were taken seriously by many Arab, Hispanic, South Asian and East Asian Americans who organized, volunteering their time for campaigns.

Arab American Institute (AAI) President **James Zogby** said after the midterm elections, "The political organization of Arab American Democrats and Republicans helped engage record numbers of Arab Americans in the civic process and raised the visibility and importance of this emerging swing vote."

AAI communications director **Jenni-**

fer Kaufman told USINFO, "Arab Americans played a very decisive role in the **Jim Webb** [Virginia Senate] race and others -- and we believe it is a harbinger of the impact Arab Americans will make in the '08 elections, especially in the new battleground states of Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey." The large Arab-American communities in those states threw their political weight behind Senate victors **Jim Webb**, **Bob Casey Jr.** and **Robert Menendez**, among other federal and state candidates. They campaigned through the mail, on the phone and canvassed for candidates responsive to issues important to Arab Americans.

Ethnic identity-based groups hosted fundraisers and knocked on doors to get out the vote. Community-active Sikhs, concerned about ethnic profiling because their turbans and beards make them vulnerable, also were dedicated campaigners. In Maryland they vigorously supported the victorious Senator-elect **Ben Cardin** and Governor-elect **Martin O'Malley**. The concerns of such organizations are more about having a voice in the democratic process than necessarily electing members of their own ethnicities. The Council on American-Islamic Relations urged Muslims to vote with blunt counsel: "Remember, if you don't vote, don't complain."

Breakthroughs in religious diversity were made as well. Two Buddhists were elected -- Japanese American **Mazie Hirono** from Hawaii and Henry "Hank" **Johnson Jr.** from Georgia. Minnesota's **Keith Ellison** is the first Muslim to be elected to the U.S. Congress. Both **Ellison** and **Johnson** are African Americans. Although there are Democratic and Republican ethnically based support

(Continued on page 15)

Secretary Rice's Remarks on Human Rights Day Commemoration

Remarks by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on December 14, 2006 on Human Rights Day Commemoration

(begin transcript)

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. Thank you, Paula, for that very generous introduction. And I'd like to welcome Congressman Smith. I also would like to thank Barry Lowenkron and DRL for their tireless efforts on a day-to-day basis on behalf of those who still need our help to escape tyranny and oppression.

This week we join together with nongovernmental groups and other human rights defenders across the globe in marking the 58th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration's precepts are embraced by people of every culture and color, every background and belief. They enshrine what President Bush calls the "nonnegotiable demands of human dignity." In countries all around the world, often at personal risk and against great odds, nongovernmental organizations and other human rights activists advocate for human rights and expose abuses. They strive to protect the rights of minorities and workers and women and to stop the trafficking in human beings. They are building vibrant civil societies, pressing for free and fair elections, and establishing accountable, law-based democracies.

Thanks in great measure to their courage and tenacity, gains for hu-

man rights and democratic principles have been historic. But progress is seldom without great challenge and those who press for change often meet with resistance and indeed harsh repression. Whenever NGOs and other human rights defenders are under siege, freedom and democracy are undermined. The world's democracies must push back. We must defend the defenders.



US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hosts a State Department commemoration of International Human Rights Week in Washington, 14 December 2006. (AFP/File/Jim Watson)

So today I am pleased to announce three key initiatives in support of NGOs and all who advance the cause of freedom in our world.

First, President Bush has created a Human Rights Defenders Fund. The fund will begin at \$1 million and will be replenished each year as needed. This fund, to be administered by the State Department, will enable us to quickly disburse small grants to human rights defenders facing extraordinary needs due to government repression. This funding, for example, could go to cover legal or medi-

cal costs or short-term support to meet the pressing needs of an activist's family.

Second, we are issuing ten NGO principles regarding the treatment of governments of non -- by governments of nongovernmental organizations. These core principles will guide our own treatment of NGOs and we will also use them to assess the action of other governments.

At a time when NGOs are under increasing pressure in many countries, it is imperative that democratic governments work in concert to defend the vital role that NGOs play in building free societies.

The ten principles are meant to complement lengthier, more detailed UN and European Union documents addressing NGOs and other human rights defenders. We applaud the UN and EU efforts and we hope that

our contribution of the ten NGO principles will help to rally worldwide support for embattled NGOs by serving as a handy resource for governments, international organizations, civil society groups, and journalists.

Our third initiative is the creation of two human rights awards. The Freedom Defenders Award will be presented to a foreign individual or NGO that has shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for human rights and democracy. The Diplomacy for Freedom

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Fact Sheet on U.S. Human Rights Initiatives

FACT SHEET

International Human Rights Week Initiatives: "Defending the Defenders"

The United States maintains its strong commitment to support those courageous individuals who are fighting for freedom and liberty around the world.

In commemoration of President Bush's proclamation of December 10 as Human Rights Day and in recognition of Human Rights Week, today Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced three new initiatives advancing U.S. Government efforts on democracy and human rights, and responding to a global trend of government crackdowns on non-governmental organizations and human rights defenders.

1) Human Rights Defenders Fund

In countries where tyranny persists, and even in states with some semblance of democratic institutions, human rights defenders are frequently put in jeopardy by the nature of their work. They are harassed, physically threatened or harmed, and many times detained and imprisoned. The creation of a global Human Rights Defenders Fund will enable the U.S. govern-

ment to respond to human rights defenders' emergency needs quickly by providing assistance to activists who are facing extraordinary financial, legal or medical needs as a result of government repression. The Fund will begin with \$1 million and will be replenished as needed.

2) NGO Principles

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are essential to ensuring government transparency and accountability. When NGOs are under siege, freedom and democracy are undermined. The U.S. government is advancing ten core NGO Principles which guide our own treatment of NGOs and which we urge other governments to respect. These principles will be an important tool for the U.S. and other governments in measuring governmental treatment of NGOs. The Principles distill and complement existing United Nations and European Union documents. We hope they will also be a useful tool for civil society groups and the media as they monitor the treatment of NGOs across the globe.

3) Freedom Awards

Beginning in December 2007, The Secretary of State will present two awards annually to recognize those

striving to advance human dignity. The Freedom Defenders Award will be awarded to a foreign activist or NGO which has demonstrated outstanding commitment to advancing liberty and courage in the face of adversity. The Diplomacy for Freedom Award will honor the U.S. Ambassador who best advances the President's Freedom Agenda by working to end tyranny and promote democracy using the full array of political, economic, diplomatic, and other tools. The Ambassador will be recognized not only for individual achievement, but for his or her leadership in engaging the entire Embassy on implementing the Freedom Agenda.

In order to strengthen the impact of these three initiatives and other policies supporting those that work for freedom and liberty, the United States will take additional steps, including strengthening our partnership with other like-minded governments, to further strengthen and institutionalize the Freedom Agenda.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Incoming 110th Congress Reflects American Diversity . . .

(Continued from page 13)

groups, the Democrats attracted more backing from such groups in the 2006 midterm elections. This helped tip the balance of Congress to the Democrats.

It is still a delicate balance, particularly in the Senate, where the Democrats retain a razor-thin majority

of one vote. That vote might be in jeopardy because of the sudden illness of Democratic Senator Tim Johnson from South Dakota. The 31-vote Democratic lead in the House is a more comfortable margin for the Democrats.

State legislatures around the country are even more reflective of cultural variety than the U.S. Con-

gress. Names like Chaudhury, Ali, Tahir, Yee, Barve, Dandekar, Takai, Machado and Nunez in state legislatures reveal roots that mirror the full spectrum of American citizenry. State assemblies are a training ground of choice for those who aspire to represent America under Washington's Capitol dome. ♦

Freedom of Information Laws Benefit Government and Public

By Jane Morse
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- Freedom of information (FOI) laws benefit both the public and the government, although governments are sometimes reluctant to adopt them, says William Ferroggiaro, a Washington-based writer and consultant with more than 15 years of experience as an advocate for government accountability.

Ferroggiaro spoke with participants from Egypt, Guyana, Macedonia, Madagascar, Pakistan and other parts of the world during a USINFO Webchat December 14.

In the United States, the Freedom of Information Act ensures the public's right to access U.S. government records and is an important component of ensuring the government's accountability to the people it serves, Ferroggiaro said.

The act prevents the creation of secret laws and regulations, he said. Through it, he added, "the public can have access to documents, although after the fact, that discuss policies that affect their daily lives. Knowing that the public will find out about ill-conceived ideas potentially prevents those ideas from being put forward."

For the government, freedom of information laws provide a legal mechanism for disclosure of information and improve credibility before the public, Ferroggiaro said.

The U.S. Freedom of Information

Act was passed by Congress in 1966 and went into effect in 1967.



William Ferroggiaro
(© Utrinski Star)

There were "a lot of political battles," however, to make it the law of the land, Ferroggiaro acknowledged. Currently, more than 70 countries have some legal right of access to information, he said.

"But it is difficult for countries anywhere to enact and implement such laws," Ferroggiaro said. Although the United Kingdom enacted its law in 2002, he noted, the law went into effect only recently.

"It is difficult for governments to see the benefit of public access to information," he said. "And in developing countries, FOI may not seem like the first priority against other pressing needs. But countries like India and South Africa have demonstrated that FOI or right to information is absolutely essential to enabling other human rights,

such as right to food and water, right to shelter, let alone freedom of expression.

"In developing countries that have a law, there is great expectation that it will reduce corruption and some evidence of that, but it is also a long struggle that must go forward with other complementary initiatives for justice, such as judicial reform," Ferroggiaro said.

"Information is the lifeblood of democracy," he said, "and we must remain forever vigilant to protect that right."

A transcript of the webchat and information about upcoming webchats are available on USINFO Webchat Station (http://usinfo.state.gov/usinfo/USINFO/Products/Webchats/ferroggiaro_14_dec_2006.html).

Additional information (<http://www.freedominfo.org/features/20060928.htm>) is available on the National Security Archive Freedom of Information Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Bush Says United States Remains Clear About Its Purpose in Iraq

By Stephen Kaufman
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush says violent sectarian extremists in Iraq have damaged national reconciliation efforts and hurt efforts to rebuild the country, but the United States remains committed to the goal of an Iraq "which can govern itself, sustain itself and defend itself."

At a December 20 news conference, Bush said 2006 was "a difficult year for our troops and the Iraqi people," but "we enter this new year clear-eyed about the challenges in Iraq, and equally clear about our purpose."

The president said 2007 likely would require "difficult choices and additional sacrifices" but said, "I believe that we're going to win."

"We cannot ... give up on the hundreds of millions of ordinary moms and dads across the Middle East who want the hope and opportunity for their children that the terrorists and extremists seek to deny them, and that's a peaceful existence," he said.

The president welcomed the formation of a moderate coalition in Iraq as a counterweight to the violent extremists in the country.

"[A] moderate coalition signals to the vast majority of the people of Iraq that we have a unity govern-

ment, that we're willing to reconcile our differences and work together, and in so doing will marginalize those who use violence to achieve political objectives," Bush said.

He added that moderate leaders, such as Shiite leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, are aware that the



President Bush gestures as addresses reporters during his news conference Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2006, in the Indian Treaty Room at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C., speaking on the challenges in Iraq and working with the new Congress in 2007.

United States is "interested in defeating extremism and we're interested in helping advance a unity government."

Overall, "success in Iraq will be success," Bush said. "There will be a combination of military success, political success and reconstruction,

and they [have] got to go hand in hand. That's why I think it's important that the moderate coalition is standing up."

The president also said he is "very strongly in favor" of reaching an accord with U.S. trading partners and the international community on the Doha round of World Trade Organization talks designed to make free trade "universal in its application." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060820155349attocnich0.3718531>).)

Free trade is "the most powerful engine for development around the world. It's going to help poor nations become wealthier nations," he said.

The transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/12/20061220-2.html>) of the president's press conference can be found at the White House Web site.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

Good Environmental Policies Can Foster Economic Growth

By Michelle Austein
USINFO Staff Writer

Washington – Because the United States and China share many environmental and economic challenges, "our governments can lead by creating good environmental policies that yield positive economic results," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Stephen Johnson said during his address at the inaugural meeting of the U.S.–China Strategic Economic Dialogue December 15.

Johnson, along with Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and other administration officials, attended the meeting in Beijing December 14-15.

During his visit, Johnson signed a trilateral statement of cooperation with the Chinese State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) and the Asian Development Bank. The agreement is intended to support the development of a cap on sulfur dioxide emissions and a emissions trading mechanisms, the use of economic and market tools to address environmental issues and the strengthening of SEPA's regional infrastructure.

"Throughout America's history, we have learned that we can protect the environment while enjoying economic growth," Johnson said. He said that since 1970, the U.S. gross domestic product almost has tripled, yet emissions of major pollutants in the U.S. have decreased by more than 50 percent.

Johnson said the U.S. experience has helped and can continue to help guide similar policies in China. For example, in the United States over the past 35 years, the number of vehicle kilometers traveled almost has tripled and the number of cars on the road has more than doubled. Yet cars and trucks are less pollut-



Minister of China's State Environmental Protection Administration Zhou Shengxian (C), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Stephen Johnson (L) and Country Director of the Asian Development Bank Toru Shibuichi shake hands during the signing ceremony of a joint statement about environmental protection at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing December 15, 2006.

ing than ever, Johnson said, because the United States has committed to improving the environmental quality of fuels, expanding the use of renewable fuels and developing cleaner vehicle engines.

When the United States clean-transportation programs are implemented fully, the annual public health benefits will be about \$17 for every \$1 invested to control pollution, Johnson said. Johnson referenced a recent report that estimated if China were to adopt similar clean fuel measures, the benefits would exceed \$20 for every \$1 invested.

"EPA is committed to continuing our collaboration with China's State Environmental Protection Administration and others in your nation on a number of clean fuel and vehicle programs," Johnson said.

According to a December 15 EPA press release, China needs large-scale investments to help improve air quality in cities and to treat wastewater discharged into rivers and lakes. The trilateral agreement will help address these problems.

However, as Johnson said, China is making progress. As a founding member of the Methane to Markets Partnership, China recently announced it will house the world's largest coal mine methane power project. The country also will host the partnerships' 2007 expo in October, which will bring together 18 countries and more than 400 public and private sector organizations to advance clean energy technology projects around the world.

The United States and China partner on many environmental initiatives. Under the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, the EPA, China and other partner countries are working with the private sector to expand investment and trade in cleaner energy technologies.

Johnson's remarks is available on the EPA Web site, as is more information about U.S.-China energy partnerships (<http://www.epa.gov/oia/airandclimate/byregion/chinaair.html>). ♦

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Secretary Rice's Remarks on Human Rights Day . . .

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Award will be presented to a U.S. ambassador who has devoted the full diplomatic influence of our government to help end tyranny and promote democracy.

Finally, I want to take this occasion to publicly congratulate the recipient of this year's Human Rights and Democracy Achievement Award, an outstanding junior officer at our Embassy in Mauritania, Joshua Morris. Joshua, why don't you step up so that people can see you? Come join me, come join me. (Laughter.)

Just a few months ago -- moments ago, I had the pleasure of presenting the award to Josh in the company of his justifiably proud family. Thanks in great measure to Josh's determination and skill in raising awareness of voter registration problems, the Government of Mauritania reopened voter registration lists to

85,000 of its citizens who would otherwise have been denied the opportunity to vote in last November's elections. Josh, thank you for your tremendous effort.

As the three initiatives I announced today demonstrate, President Bush remains firmly committed to a foreign policy rooted in human freedom and a central component of that policy is defending the work of NGOs. The work of freedom cannot be completed overnight, but it is urgent work that cannot be delayed. So as we join men and women around the world in marking the anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we resolve to work with all free and democratic nations in defending the defenders of human dignity and democracy across the globe.

Thank you very much. Thank you for coming. (Applause.) ♦

Second-Generation Muslim Immigrants Feel Strong Islamic Identity . . .

(Continued from page 9)

But in the United States, Islam is a "newcomer," not quite understood by many Americans, Afsaruddin said. The Wilson Center report estimated there were 6 million Muslims in the United States and that almost 70 percent of them were born in other countries. Muslim Americans on the whole are younger than the general U.S. population.

"Most people in the United States wouldn't think twice about a [Catholic] nun's habit or a Jew's yarmulke," Afsaruddin said. But because Muslims are part of a newer wave of immigrants, Afsaruddin said, a woman who wears a hijab at a shopping mall gets noticed.

Masmoudi characterized the amount raised in Philadelphia as "below expectations." The center has ambitious goals to host university seminars, visit churches and synagogues, hire a media liaison, do a documentary about women leaders in Muslim societies, increase contact with Congress, publish newsletters, and expand its annual conference held in April in Washington.

Afsaruddin tries to reach out to non-Muslims when she is on sabbatical from teaching at Notre Dame. She recently spoke at a seminar at Amarillo College in Texas, about the complexities of Islam. She said that sometimes, at such meetings, "you get questions that express a fundamental hostility." But at the end of the Ama-

rillo seminar, many of the women hugged her and told her they had learned a lot. One woman told Afsaruddin she had driven 145 kilometers to attend the lecture.

"People will go to great lengths to have access to reliable information," Afsaruddin said. "It is time-consuming, but so rewarding." For additional information on life in the United States, see Population and Diversity (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/history_geography_and_population/population_and_diversity.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦